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SYNDICATES

Talent May Come From A Pig Farm

SAN FRANCISCO

Talent is where you find it, submits Stanleigh Arnold, features editor of both Chronicle Features Syndicate and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

And the CFS selection board composed of Charles de Young, Chronicle editor and publisher; Scott Newhall, executive editor, and Arnold has uncovered a versatile aggregation of creative people from varied fields.

"Stan" Arnold did not expect to find writing ability in a former pig farmer who announced himself as a new member of the Peace Corps and said he would like to provide special Chronicle reports from Ecuador.

A Bad Moment

At the moment the editor had donned his Chronicle hat and it was damp with perspiration from a confrontation with a very proud father who could not understand why his six-year-old son's art was not deemed suitable for publication.

His first reaction was to blame the receptionist for flagrant disobedience in admitting the man dressed in jeans, blue shirt, worn and faded Levi jacket and farmer's boots.

The visitor was short and thin. His craggy face was lined by the trials of nearly 50 years. His name was Moritz Thomsen.

Within minutes Arnold realized his almost unwelcomed guest was an extremely rare kind of man, a practical idealist possessed of courage, wit and an astounding breadth of knowledge.

Just A Suggestion

The editor explained space limitations yet suggested he might send in an article now and then for selection and possible use in the Chronicle *This World* magazine.

The letters came back and the editor was surprised to find the man from the hog farm in the upper reaches of California's San Joaquin Valley wrote appealing copy. Readers liked his reports, too.

And editors around the country share this view, it has been established by amazing results of a pre-test conducted before full syndication.

For a dozen editors of the 30 provided with copies of the 10-

story sequence immediately ordered the series. A complete distribution with special art is under way.

The man who turned to the Peace Corps when finally on the verge of bankruptcy because "with hogs selling at 12 cents a pound" he "was not making enough to pay even for their food" has now become indeed the "Ambassador in Levis" described by CFS.

"In our view, a man like this represents the best American export—a warm, hard-working, selfless and intelligent diplomat in blue jeans," Arnold explained. "His writing is vivid and clear, his style uniquely his own."

His reports also explain the Peace Corps to fellow-Americans, for Moritz Thomsen possesses that ability to get along with people—and with readers—that Latin Americans call simpatico.

Trivialities End

In his 10-part report the writer tells how he finally received the Corps' invitation "over the signature of the director reproduced so cleverly it has every appearance of having personally affixed" and turned from "a life of habit, harassed by all the trivialities of life to a new kind of life."

Thomsen takes you to Montana State College, where he investigated his investigator. Then he moves on to launching a piggery in the Andes and a ride in an Ecuadorian bus "in which you undergo a personality change that is truly profound."

He tells of "little things that sweep the cobwebs out of the brain," of natives who accepted death "so calmly it was obscene," his reactions to a strange culture and how to learn Spanish.

And he describes the problem of being set apart, separated from the true life of a town so "even the fact you can't eat those horrible baked or boiled bananas makes a sort of freak of you."

The series ends with his breakthrough to acceptance, when a fisherman said "I think you're a good man, let's be brothers" and said it "so naturally, so sweetly the whole room blazes with light."

Illustrations for the series were prepared by William Wilkerson of CFS. Thomsen's articles are being assembled in a book by the University of Washington Press, with an introduction by Jack Vaughn, Peace Corps' director.